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ON THE COVER
Athena and Carleigh Rand are one of the many fabulous newlywed couples featured in our 2019 Fall Love & Marriage issue. Photo by Melissa Hesse of Rivets and Roses

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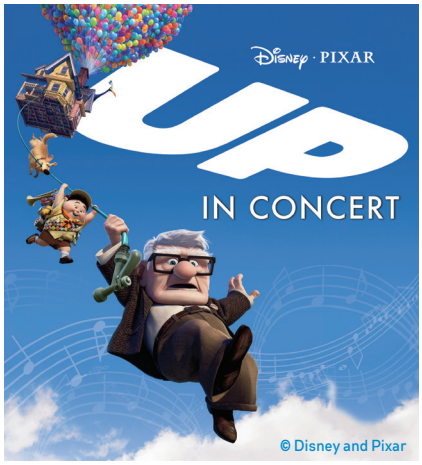

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FROM THE EDITOR | BY CHRIS TARBOX

A Harvest Of Love

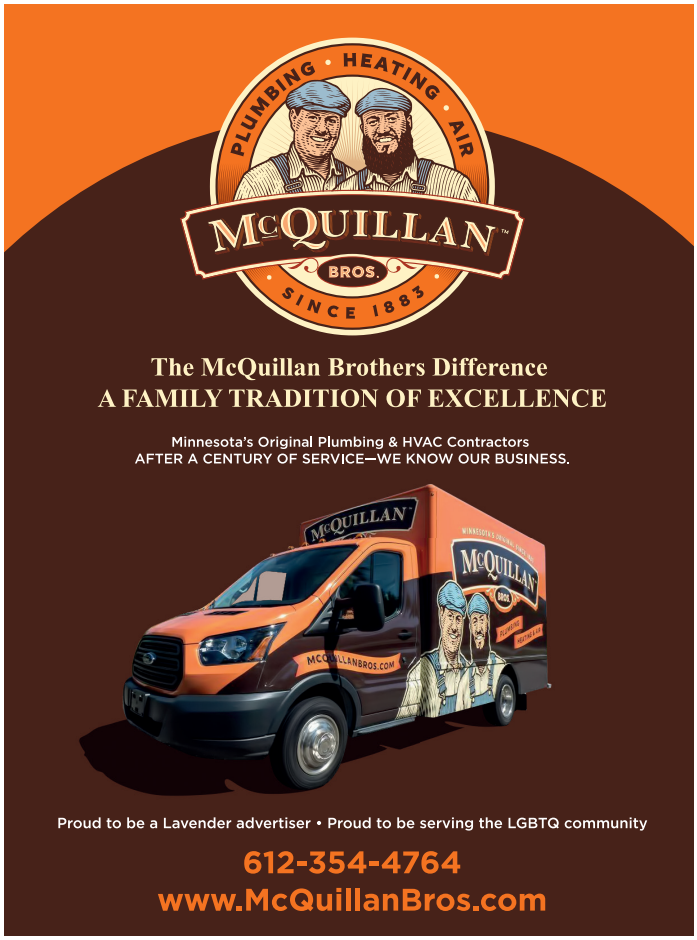
You know, a lot of folks say that May is prime time for weddings. And it makes sense: the warm weather is back, the spring colors fancy up our surroundings, and spring just feels like a perfect time for fresh starts for our romantic hearts.

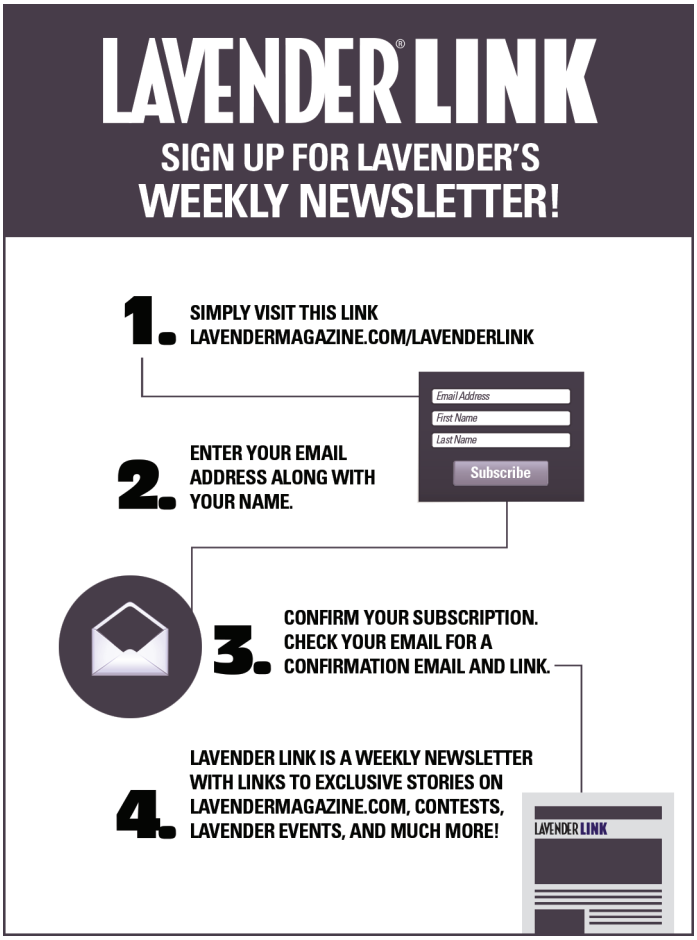
But what some folks may not realize is that the autumn season is equally fitting for tying the knot: after all, the extreme heat of summer has gone away, the beautiful colors are still there (but better!), and you get an excellent excuse to include hot apple cider (or hard apple cider, or both!) in the reception.

With Lavender's 2019 Fall Love & Marriage issue, we set out to prove that wedded bliss isn't just reserved for the spring and summer: we profile veteran fashion designer Sean Bolte and his fierce designs perfect for that special day; we meet Maxine Britt and her up-and-coming gender-neutral clothing line Mx Apparel; we learn about why Burl Oaks Golf Club in Minnetrista can double as a perfect wedding spot; and best of all, we relive seven recent rainbow weddings, all in their beautiful, heartwarming glory!

We also follow Carla Waldemar's trip to legendary Nashville, and we preview this year's Minnesota Walk To End HIV on Oct. 12.

And before we go, don't forget! You can nominate an individual, business, or nonprofit that has done great work for the local GLBT community for our annual Lavender Community Awards! For more information, visit www.lavendermagazine.com/resources/communityawards and submit your nominations before Oct. 31! ∎





A WORD IN EDGEWISE | BY E.B. BOATNER

I'll Not Do It Any More—Until Next Time

A five-hour wait? "My Flight" had assured all was well: plane leaving 3:45, arriving San Francisco six-ish. Here, the board leers, "Delayed."

Your flight now leaves 6:05, arriving after 8 p.m. There's not time to go home, fidget, then return. The crowd about you thins as they stream down the hall to board a flight to Detroit. You sit down, alone at your designated gate. There are 263 books on your iPad, and there is a bar down the corridor. It is now just one o'clock.

Traveling, you realize, is a lot like childbirth. Nature programmed humans to forget the pain and terror of the experience and push on to their next "vacation" with optimism and great expectations. Like a harrowing 24-hour labor, one survived, you can dine out on travel mishaps for months to come.

Like expectant parents laying-in bassinets and onesies in the first trimester, you've prepared. Watered the plants, paid the rent, clipped your toenails, and packed, from lists drawn up weeks in advance, covering every contingency. Your deputized friend has a key, will come tend plants, pets, and mail.

At carefree twenty, you lipped a toothbrush and some underwear in a backpack and headed out the door. Old age—*cautious maturity*—requires fine-tuning, from head to toe. Now there are categories, and subsets. How many of each and why? Shirts: Three polos, two Ts, one (two?) long-sleeved *light*, one long-sleeved flannel, one sleeping. Jacket(s)—Windbreaker, one dressy, one casual—Can I afford a place swanky enough to warrant "Dressy"? Raincoat?

Maintenance. Pills, a.m., p.m., counted into daily doses. PRN: Tylenol, caffeine, antihistamines, anti-diarrhea, Band-Aids, anti-itch cream, antibiotic cream, sunscreen… Glasses, backups, sunglasses. Everything used to fit into this bag.

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Nature will erase the tedium, turbulence, and strayed luggage (never check the cameras). The bank proffers another offer, and you'll be off. The memories will last a lifetime, and you won't have to send them to college. ∎

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A Bolte Of Inspiration

Whether you're stunning crowds with your burlesque performance or walking down the aisle, L'exquisite Reveal owner Sean Bolte has a design that'll make you look downright fierce.

BY CHRIS TARBOX

Sean Bolte's passion for fashion and design manifested at quite an early age, and he had plenty of venerable influences at the time.

"When I was young, I wanted to be either a Las Vegas showgirl or a fashion designer, and my favorite television shows at the time were *The Carol Burnett Show* and *The Cher Show*," said Bolte. "They were costume overload!"

However, it wasn't just television that sparked Bolte's love for fashion design.

"My mother used to make outfits for me and my siblings," said Bolte. "She was the one to teach me to sew, knit and crochet. The first outfit I remember she made for me was a robin's egg blue leisure suit. I loved that suit! I was fascinated that she could measure, cut and sew pieces of fabric into a wearable garment. I am still fascinated by the process every time I construct something."

Earning a Bachelor's Degree in Fashion Merchandising and Design, Bolte then moved to Lincoln, Nebraska, where he met his future husband, holding a number of odd jobs before finding work at a local alteration shop.

"Even though I only worked at the alteration shop part time, this is where I learned about fashion design and garment construction as a career," said Bolte. "Connie Olsen, the proprietor, had formally been the

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2019 PICK the knot best of weddings

head of costuming at the University in Lincoln, and she ran the alterations of the very chic J. Braggs. Connie taught me the differences between constructing clothes and constructing costumes. She also knew how to alter any garment. I think clothing alterations are much harder then constructing a garment from scratch and it is a lost art. People who are able to do it well are true artists."

Bolte and his husband moved to Kansas City, where Bolte worked in retail management for 15 years, a job which eventually brought him to Minneapolis, where he met another highly influential person in his fashion career.

"I worked with local burlesque star Elektra Cute at my retail job; one day I wore a jacket that I had made myself, and she inquired about it," said Bolte. "She thought if I could make a jacket for my myself, then I could make a burlesque costume for her and with that my career as a burlesque couturier was born. Burlesque costumes were not the direction I thought my design career would take but I have enjoyed every minute of it."

Bolte expressed massive appreciation for the local burlesque community's ingenuity when it comes to costume design, but also how it serves as a great representation of what burlesque is.

"It is whatever you want it to be and what direction you want to take the art of burlesque in," said Bolte. "It is all sizes, all ages, all genders, all colors, all everything! I just hope my little part in this community has helped someone realize their burlesque dreams."

Bolte describes his particular fashion style as vintage glam couture, with a twist.

"My love of old movies definitely has shaped my design aesthetic," said Bolte. "I am constantly trying to recapture those costumes and give them a modern and uniquely Sean twist. Elektra and burlesque [have] been another defining factor in my design aesthetic. I would consider Elektra a muse for me. She and I just work so well together and usually have the same vision on things."

In respect to his design work, Bolte says that he's been warmly embraced by the Twin Cities' GLBT community.

"The burlesque community here in the Twin Cities is such a wonderful melting pot of all things that make up our GLBT community," said Bolte. "I have done mostly costumes and clothes for female presenting individuals as that is my wheelhouse, but I have had the honor to work with a few male presenting individuals also. I have not done a ton of weddings, but I am always looking to expand my repertoire and service as many individuals in our community."

For the designs showcased in this particular photo shoot, Bolte uti-

lized 1960s vintage French couture as a jumping-off point.

"I wanted them to be all about the structure and the silhouette," said Bolte. "This collection is very pared down for me, but I really wanted the fabrics and the shapes to be the star of the show. The colors of the garments are not the traditional colors for wedding attire, but I think that is what makes them unique and beautiful. There are also a variety of silhouettes from which to choose from. We have a jumpsuit, a gown, a bubble dress, and a mini dress. There are also multiple different headpieces and veils to choose. I think the way that I styled them shows they could easily live within the realm of wedding attire."

The shoot was held at the Grethen House in Edina—where Bolte works for his full-time job—and starred three local burlesque stars acquainted with Bolte: Dahlia Dulce, Nadi A'marena, and Elektra Cute.

Continued on page 14

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"I used these individuals because I know they would make my clothes look beautiful, and I have worked with most of them before on numerous costumes," said Bolte. "They are all so great in front of the camera so I really didn't need to direct them. Emma Wondra was the photographer for the shoot, and they did a great job."

"Emma was a referral through Elektra, and their style definitely complimented the clothing," Bolte continued. "Mary, the owner [of Grethen House], does such a beautiful job landscaping that having a shoot there was a no-brainer. Not only did we have the beautiful front and courtyard to shoot in, but we had the whole 50th and France area to work with."

Having made a name for himself in the Twin Cities and beyond with his fashion acumen, Bolte hopes to make burlesque couture a full-time gig in the next phase of his career.

"I am working on a website as we speak and working on expanding my clientele across the globe," said Bolte. "I have had the distinct pleasure to make costumes for many of burlesque's brightest and respected luminaries across this country, but starting a business that is 100 percent word of mouth takes planning and patience. I have a full-time career as a retail manager, and I have a full-time career as a burlesque couturier. I have given 20 years to the retail side of my career and I want to give the next 20 years to my passion. I may not be that showgirl any more, but I can make damn sure that every costume I produce will make my client feel like one."

To check out more of Sean Bolte's fashion designs and inquire about custom design work, visit www.facebook.com/Lexquisitereveal. ∎

Photographer: *Emma Wondra (@emmawondra)*
Designer: *Sean Bolte (@lexquisitereveal)*
Models: *Elektra Cute (@thetesla.oftease), Dahlia Dulce (@dahliadulce), Nadi A'marena (@nadi_amarena)*
Shot at: *Grethen House Edina, 50th and France Shops*

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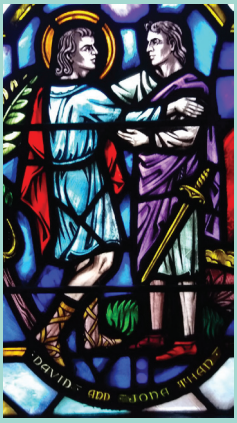
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In The Mix With Mx

Maxine Britt showcases her gender-neutral-friendly line of clothes that fits any situation, whether it's on the runway or at a wedding.

Want to give off an edgy vibe as a wedding guest? Try out this amazing yellow plaid skirt as modeled by Thar Jor'dan. Photo by Andrea Sawyer

BY HOLLY PETERSON

"Whether we like it or not, everyone participates in fashion. We all get dressed each morning. And for transgender and non-binary people, getting dressed can be a particularly difficult and even dysphoric experience." Maxine Britt, the creative force behind Mx Apparel, has made it part of her mission to make gender-neutral clothing that makes the kind of statement, and that exists outside of that ever-present and oh-so-imaginary gender binary with which Western culture has been stifling us.

Britt's passion for clothing has been a part of her life for a long time. "I've had an interest in fashion since I was very young," Britt explains, remembering sewing tiny outfits for her Barbie dolls and watching Project Runway growing up. Her relationship with clothing and fashion continued to develop as she got older: not only did she seek out learning opportunities, she also found that choosing the clothes that she wore each day filled a part of her that nothing else could.

"As a queer person going to school in a suburb of conservative Arizona, some days were challenging, and getting dressed in the morning was the only thing that consistently made me happy. That's how I knew that I wanted to go into fashion."

The label that Britt has since created, Mx Apparel, is barely over a year old, but you would not know that looking at Britt's achievements so far. The first big break for Mx Apparel was its introduction at FWMN fashion show Local Coterie.

"[I]t was an incredibly rewarding experience to see my designs on a runway," said Britt. Being a part of the show even led to the first ever Mx Apparel sale, which is a huge milestone in its own right. Since then, Britt was involved with the Planned Parenthood fashion show "Ready or

Maxine Britt's lifelong passion for fashion led her to found the gender-neutral Mx Apparel line. Photo by Sophie Sissi

Continued on page 18

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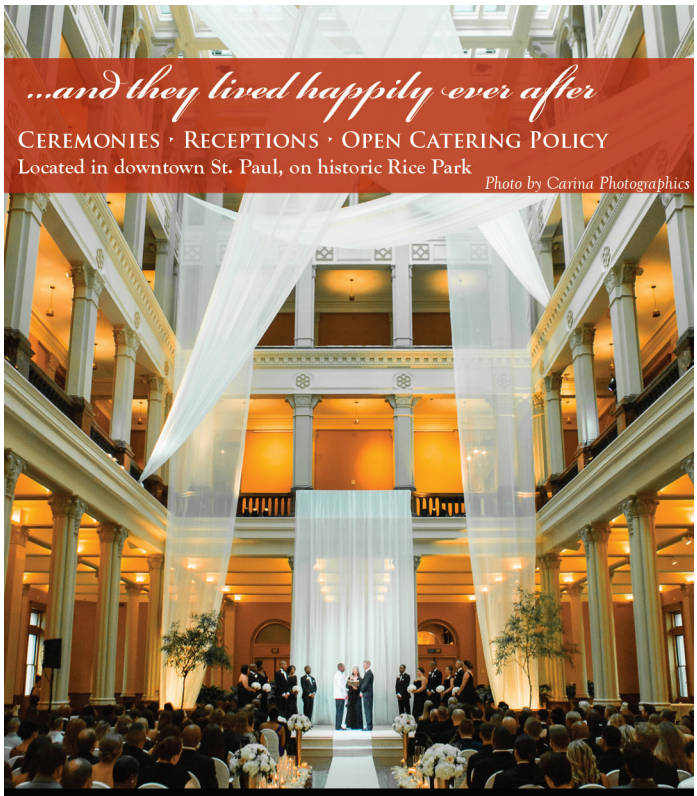

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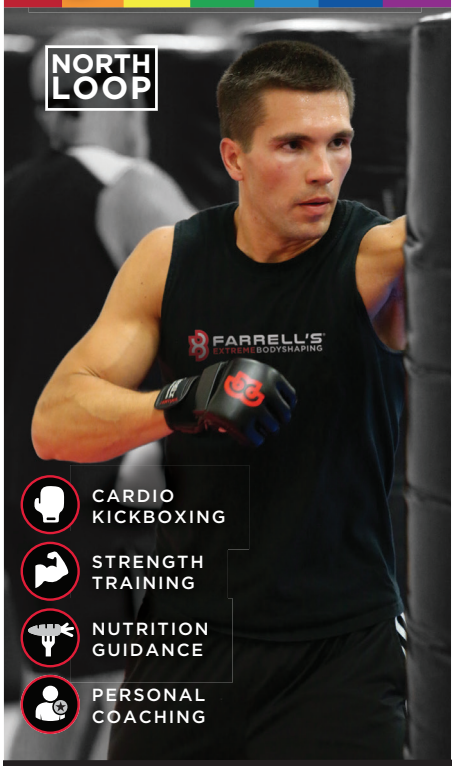

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Hot 2019", was a finalist in the Fashion Scholarship Fund in New York, and had a pop-up show at a local boutique.

After getting involved in the Twin Cities GLBT community, Britt realized that she wanted to focus her brand on gender-neutral clothing.

"I see it as a way to fill a need for people who exist outside of binary gender," she says. "It can be a huge challenge to create clothes to fit a wide range of bodies, but… that challenge isn't unique to gender neutral apparel. [T]hat's part of why I love making gender neutral pieces. It pushes me to be my most creative and sensitive to the needs of my unique target market."

Once she decided what kind of clothing she wanted to make, her label's name came naturally. On the one hand, Britt frequently shortens her first name (Maxine) to "Mx" in writing. On the other, "Mx" is a gender-neutral honorific. As Britt explains, the name "ended up being perfect for my brand—showcasing my community and me personally at the same time."

Drawing from influences like Janelle Monáe and the popular comic Paper Girls, Britt has created a unique line of clothing that, while androgynous, still includes pieces like dresses and uses some stereotypically "feminine" colors.

"[N]ot all gender-neutral clothing has to be androgynous, [but] Mx Apparel definitely is!" Britt says. "My designs are typically bold, through use of color or shape, and edgy, with metal details."

When I asked if any of her designs would work for wedding season, Britt lit up.

"Absolutely! I have a pair of pants, called the Double Cross pant, that create a folding, sculptural element on one hip. These pants are unconventional, but still easily dressed up. For an edgier event, I also make a long skirt in yellow plaid with two zippers down the thigh and a smaller folding accent at each hip, cinched in with a belt."

With so much already accomplished, Britt continues to dream big. She will be releasing a new clothing collection in February, which is heavily inspired by the aforementioned Paper Girls. Look forward to more gender-neutral goodness, characterized with angular shapes and a twilight palette. Mx Apparel will also do another pop-up shortly the release of the collection. Long term, Mx Apparel will continue to create clothing meant to help fashionable GLBT folx, especially those who identify as non-binary, feel more comfortable in their own skin and their own clothes. And if, on her journey, Britt gets the opportunity to dress Janelle Monáe or Aaron Phillip, well, that would just be icing on the cake. For now, though, Britt is just happy to finish her last year at the U of M and and put the final touches on her latest collection.

Make sure you follow Mx Apparel (@mxappareldesign on Instagram, Twitter, or Facebook), so you will be the first to see all the forthcoming designs. If you want to order a (possibly customized) piece of Mx Apparel, you can do that through www.mxappareldesign.com. ∎

With Mx Apparel, you can feel like yourself and look damn good doing it in any situation. Photo by Josh Stokes, modeled by Shannon Lee

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Long But Not Straight

GLBT Life Partnerships Tee Off at Burl Oaks Golf Club

BY TERRANCE GRIEP

Burl Oaks is perfect for small gatherings to large receptions. Photo courtesy of Stephen Hamilton

You are surrounded: by traps made of sand, by hazards made of water, twin perils that entangle the ubiquitous, emerald hills like crooked spider webs dotted with unwary, dimpled fruit flies. You stand intently, your back to a hushed, expectant crowd. They await the effort you're about to expel, their breath bated, many wondering if you have what it takes to come through in the clutch.

Thinking breezy, cross-cut thoughts, or at least trying to, you command your body to become a singular amalgam of tension and relaxation, of zen and ambition, hips loose and feet tight. The next moment stretches lushly before you, waiting for you to define your future, to grant yourself your Happily Ever After.

You've got this. You clear your throat, wipe the sweat from your palms, clear your throat again, forcing your heart out of that space. You're ready—really, finally ready. You've got this. You've got this.

You are, of course, about to get married at Burl Oaks Golf Club.

"Play. Celebrate. Enjoy." The words that appear on the home page of Burl Oaks Golf Club's website probably refer to that sport with the balls and the sticks and questionable pants, but those unsung lyrics might just as well refer to weddings hosted by that same venue.

Burl Oaks Golf Club offers a full spectrum of wedding services, ranging from Fairy Tale to Vegas Drive-Thru and all points in between. "Whether you are planning a small, casual gathering or a large, formal reception, Burl Oaks has the event facilities for you," their website supposes. "We can help you plan every detail of the big day!"

This help and this planning begins by consulting someone like Stephen Hamilton, Burl Oaks' event coordinator and clubhouse manager. "I have been in the club industry for over thirty years," he assures. "I've learned from the best and apply that knowledge in every facet of the events."

So Hamilton brings serious cred to the marriage game… but so does the venue itself. "[Burl Oaks Golf Club] began to host outdoor weddings and wedding receptions in 1991 when our new clubhouse opened," Hamilton remembers. "The views and the deck attached to our ballroom are amazing features."

Burl Oaks Golf Club started hosting outdoor weddings and receptions in 1991 upon the opening of its clubhouse. Photo courtesy of Stephen Hamilton

This is where the 19th Hole of your golf course wedding, more generally referred to as the reception, often lands.

"The Wenkstern Ballroom offers a warm and comfortable environment for your event with stunning windows featuring glorious panoramic views of the golf course," the website acclaims. "Seating is available for up to 150 guests." This implicitly lends both members of the new marriage the opportunity to sharpen their avoiding-the-in-laws skills.

This public bonding has been partaken of by couples of every stripe. "We have hosted two [same-sex] weddings and receptions in the last two years," Hamilton reports. "In perspective, we only do ten weddings a year." Golf scorers might be tempted to refer to that record as an eagle.

And unlike golf itself, there is no off-season where weddings are concerned. "Summer weddings are warm and surrounded by green—fairways, tee-boxes, lush trees, flowers everywhere," says Hamilton. "Winter weddings are elegant in their own right. The views are still gorgeous white with snow and trees with no leaves. It looks like a winter wonderland—beautiful."

Burl Oaks welcomes GLBT lovebirds to tie the knot at their venue with open arms.
Photo courtesy of Stephen Hamilton

Burl Oaks Golf Club can lend you various electronic implements which might set the mood or catalyze the celebration. Audio/visual equipment, large screen televisions, and liquid crystal display projectors are yours for the asking. And of course, no wedding not set on the echoey steps of City Hall would be complete without centerpieces, candles, and linens. Theoretically, golf equipment is also available in profusion.

"We welcome all of our weddings and guests with a five-star memorable experience," Hamilton promises. "We guarantee that our guests will rave about their experience with us. We have the reviews and thank you cards to back that up." In other words, Burl Oaks Golf Club can tee up your fairy tale nuptials… but the Happily Ever After is up to you. ∎

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Meet Me At The Trailhead

Jason Nguyen and Kellan Baker say 'I do' in one of Minneapolis' most unique wedding venues: the Trailhead at Theodore Wirth Regional Park.

BY KASSIDY TARALA

From Vietnam to St. Cloud to Minneapolis to a dating app, Jason Nguyen and Kellan Baker came a long way to find each other, but now that they have, they're never letting go.

"We both knew from the beginning that each of us could be the one for each other. After countless dates between us with guys we didn't connect with, we knew something was special when we met," says Baker.

Nguyen, originally from Vietnam, moved to St. Cloud when he was seven years old. After attending college in St. Cloud, he relocated to Minneapolis where he currently works in sales at Agiliti. Baker, who grew up in the small resort town of Battle Lake, originally moved to Minneapolis to attend the University of Minnesota and stayed to work in his current position as a sales representative in the commercial architecture and interior design industry. Lucky for the happy couple, their paths crossed while living in Minneapolis, and their relationship has only grown stronger since.

"We balance each other so well. [I'm] a little more reserved, and Jason is more outgoing. We compliment what each other lacks, and it makes us both better rounded individuals," Baker says. "Our favorite thing is being able to laugh with each other."

Baker proposed to Nguyen at their home while surrounded by friends and family for Nguyen's 28th birthday, and the couple tied the knot not long after at the Trailhead at Theodore Wirth Regional Park.

"This building is newly built and has striking architectural features. We opted for this site because of the unique design and the ability to have an outdoor space that was covered from the elements in case of inclement weather. A narrow pathway lined with tall timber columns along the building's south side created a perfect space for our small ceremony," Baker says. "Our reception was at the Theodore Wirth Chalet, just around the bend from the ceremony. This building, again, spoke to us because of the architectural design. The Chalet is over 100 years old and was a perfect contrast to the ceremony, which was more modern."

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The couple had an open bar and served a Thai buffet catered by Sawatdee. Baker says décor was kept minimal to let the design of the space do the talking. "After dinner, we danced the night away with friends and family," he adds.

Bert Jackson, Trailhead events manager of Theodore Wirth Regional Park, says Nguyen and Baker approached them with ideas of a special place for their ceremony, noting the lighting alongside the architecturally designed building provided the ideal setting for them. "We worked together to create the vision, and it was a pleasure to help them find the ultimate location for their ceremony," she says.

Baker and Nguyen's wedding was the third wedding hosted at the Trailhead and the first GLBT wedding, but Jackson says they are excited to have more scheduled.

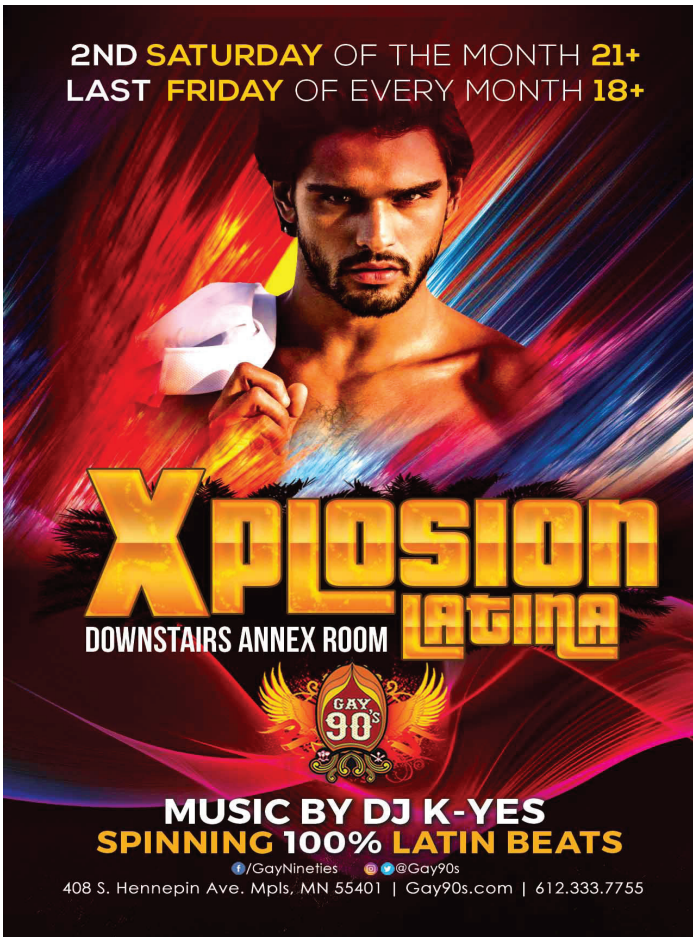
"Not only is the Trailhead in a beautiful urban park setting, but we also have two entire walls of windows in our Great Hall bringing the beauty of the park inside to the celebration. Start your celebration in one of our several outdoor locations for ceremonies, from the location that Kellan and Jason originated along the beauty of the building, to more private green spaces of the park," Jackson says. "Our reception space, the Great Hall, has Douglas Fir beam structures and ceilings, as well as beautiful custom wood tables that enhance the natural feel of the venue."

The rental comes with tables and chairs, a private conference room for customizable staging, and an outdoor patio equipped with outdoor tables, chairs, and two fire pits. There is also a grass lawn adjacent to the patio, which Jackson says provides a wonderful area for outdoor games for guests.

"It was quite the busy day and lots of preparation leading up to that one special moment. We both felt so happy to finally tie our bonds in front of our friends and family. After walking down the aisle hand-in-hand, we were elated to begin our lives together as a married couple," Baker says.

For more information about weddings at the Trailhead at Theodore Wirth Regional Park, visit www.loppet.org. ▮

Photographer: *Mish Ellis – Lens on Records*
Date of Wedding: *May 26, 2019*
Dating Since: *November 2015*
Location of Ceremony: *Theodore Wirth Trailhead Terrace*
Location of Reception: *Theodore Wirth Chalet*
Cake: *Cosetta's*
Invitations: *Minted*
Music: *Lens On Records*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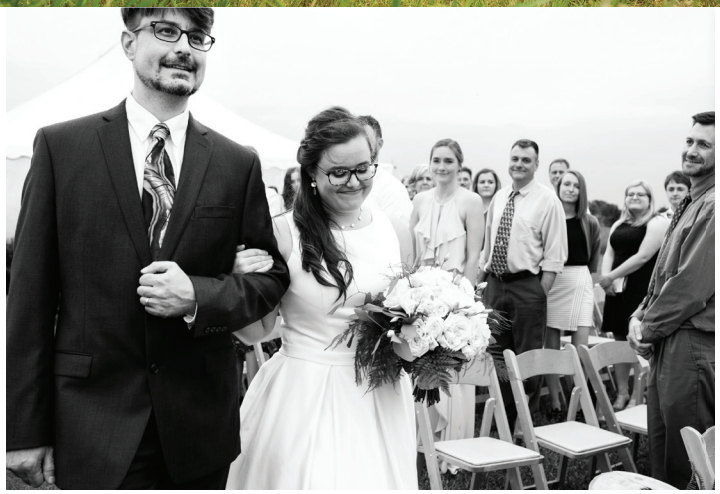
Queens Of The Castle

Athena and Carleigh Rand share how they went from high school classmates to wives.

BY KASSIDY TARALA



Perhaps if you asked Carleigh Rand and Athena Stifter when they were in the same 9th grade AP human geography class if they thought that they would one day share a last name, they would have told you you're crazy. But after going from classmates to friends to lovers, Carleigh and Athena Rand happily said 'I do' in a wedding filled with family, friends, beer, and—of course—love.

"We are both from Cottage Grove, Minnesota. We also both attended St. Olaf College in Northfield," Carleigh says. "We both enjoy hiking and camping, and we have a goofball three-legged rescue dog, Junie!"

Athena majored in environmental studies and is currently working on an organic vegetable farm, while Carleigh majored in biology and Spanish and is now in her first year at the University of Minnesota Medical School where she is studying to become a pediatrician.

After becoming good friends their junior year of high school, Carleigh and Athena say that did not foresee one day falling in love with each other.

"It was not love at first sight. Athena was friends with my best friend and didn't think much of me until later! We initially bonded over having the same taste in music," Carleigh says. "We became very good friends before even considering dating, which didn't come until after graduating high school."

With a first date at the ever-romantic ice castles in Stillwater, Carleigh knew she had to propose to Athena in a recreation of their very first date together.

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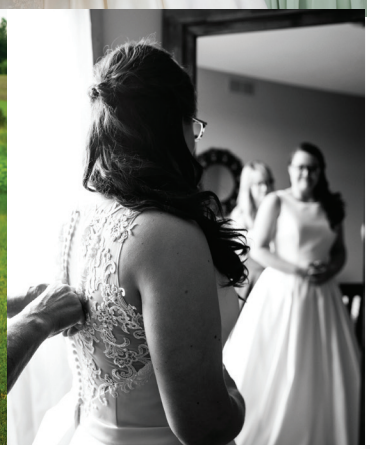


"Carleigh recreated our first date in downtown Stillwater. We went and got sandwiches at the co-op, then we went to the ice castles. Carleigh proposed in one of the alcoves of the castle, then we went on the ice slides to celebrate! It was the middle of February and freezing cold. When we got back to Northfield, we met up with friends at a brewery and had a mini, impromptu engagement party," Athena says.

"Our wedding and reception were held outside of Athena's parents' home in Prescott, Wisconsin. There were approximately 120 guests. One of the pastors from St. Olaf officiated our wedding—we had grown very close to her and it was such an honor! Our wedding and reception incorporated a lot of green and wooden elements, fitting with the prairie and woods surrounding the site. Our reception was full of laughter, tears, and dancing!" Carleigh says.

The couple had a cake made by Carleigh's niece and donuts for all of the guests, leaving no sweet tooth unsatisfied. They also featured a beer truck with all of their favorite beers and yard games, particularly for the little ones. "Overall, we had a great time with delicious food, and music and dancing," Carleigh adds.

"It was literally the best day of my life. I felt very surrounded by love and support. It was the perfect culmination of our whole relationship and the beginning of the rest of our lives. There were a lot of emotions and our officiant, Pastor Katie, delivered a beautiful message," Athena says.

Carleigh agrees that it was the best day of her life. Though she isn't big on crowds, she says she didn't mind being the center of attention, as long as it meant standing by Athena's side.

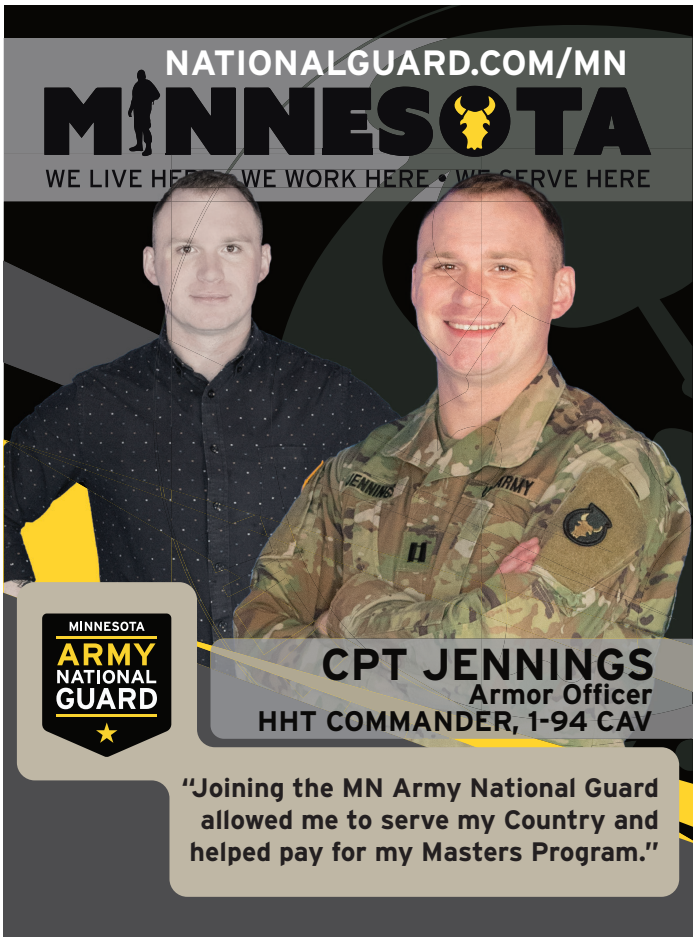
"It was so incredible! I just couldn't stop smiling. I was surprised at how at ease I felt the entire day—I'm not much for being in front of crowds, but all I could think about was how happy I felt to be marrying the love of my life, and be surrounded by family and friends who loved and cared for us," Carleigh says.

Because the couple have known each other since 9th grade, Athena says things like trust and understanding come easily to them in their marriage.

"My favorite thing about our relationship is that I can trust Carleigh 100 percent. I've known her forever, and at the same time, we get to learn so much about each other and grow together," Athena says. "We challenge each other to be our best selves."

"I think we really just get each other. We're very much on the same wavelength and can communicate well," Carleigh adds. ∎

Photographer: *Melissa Hesse of Rivets and Roses*
Date of Wedding: *June 15, 2019*
Dating Since: *June 2014*
Location of Ceremony & Reception: *Private property in Prescott, WI*
Florist: *Terri Uy-Lennon*
Stylist: *Kaytie Rouse (Athena's hair) / Ficocellos (Carleigh's hair)*
Cake: *Donuts by Dorothy Ann Bakery (our 10 y/o niece made the cake)*
Invitations: *Michelle Huber Photography*
Music: *Adagio*



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[REAL WEDDINGS]

PRODUCED BY CHRIS TARBOX

LARISSA ROSE AND EMILY LYNN PHELPS WOEBKENBERG

Photographer: Lisa Quinlan at Gray Duck Studios
Date of Wedding: Sept. 1, 2019
Dating Since: July 6, 2017
Location of Ceremony & Reception: Bar and Cafe Lurcat
Wedding Coordinator: Jon Veda
Cake: Cafe and Bar Lurcat
Invitations: Minted

[REAL WEDDINGS]

PRODUCED BY CHRIS TARBOX

KYLE SMESTAD AND KYLE THOMAS

Photographer: Danielle Lund Photography
Date of Wedding: May 24, 2019
Dating Since: July 2014
Location of Ceremony & Reception: Silverwood Park, St. Anthony, MN
Wedding Coordinator: DIY
Stylist: DIY (Suits from Mens Wearhouse)
Cake: Sugar and Spice cupcakes
Invitations: DIY
Florist: DIY
Music/DJ: Complete

[REAL WEDDINGS]

PRODUCED BY CHRIS TARBOX

KARIN AND BEVERLY KELLER

Photographer: Mystic Lake
Date of Wedding: June 15, 2019
Dating Since: 2009
Location of Ceremony & Reception: Mystic Lake Center, Prior Lake, MN
Wedding Coordinator: Brooke Follen
Stylist: Cole's Salon Burnsville
Cake: Cupcakes from Mystic Lake
Invitations: Shutterfly
Florist: Bachman's Apple Valley
Music/DJ: Blue Line Entertainment/Liam Duggan

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[REAL WEDDINGS]

PRODUCED BY CHRIS TARBOX

PATRICK KISPERT & PATRICK PUCKETT

Photographer: 2nd Truth Photography assisted by J. Olson Weddings
Date of Wedding: Sept. 14, 2019
Dating Since: Feb. 2, 2013
Location of Ceremony & Reception: Clarence W. Wigington Pavilion, Harriet Island, Saint Paul
Wedding Coordinator: Brittany Williams, City of Saint Paul
Cake: The Deco Catering
Invitations: Zola.com
Florist: Wisteria Design Studio & Saint Paul Farmers Market
Music/DJ: Complete Wedding & Events, Amanda Flom

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[REAL WEDDINGS]

PRODUCED BY CHRIS TARBOX

LEAH AND HEATHER SCHEIN FOXHILL

Photographer: Penny Photographics
Date of Wedding: May 18, 2019
Dating Since: December 2017
Location of Ceremony & Reception: Green Acres Event Center, Eden Prairie, MN
Wedding Coordinator: Murph (friend of the couple)
Stylist: Audra of Fox Den
Cake: Sweet Retreat
Invitations: Minted
Florist: Bellagala
Music/DJ: Bellagala

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TRAVEL | BY CARLA WALDEMAR | PHOTOS BY CARLA WALDEMAR

Appropriate for the Athens of the South, this replica of the Parthenon was built for the 1897 Exposition in Nashville.

Nashville & Beyond

I'm not one to point to Queen Victoria as a monarch of good taste. The queen was known for denouncing pleasurable entertainments in the name of morality, yet—after hearing a performance of the visiting Fisk Jubilee Singers from Nashville—she broke stride to praise their hometown, calling it a "music city."

The nickname has become town's tagline. This magnet for country music boasts one hundred new residents. Per. Day. Songwriters, singers and strummers pour in, along with everyone else, from their accountants to the bold-name chefs that fuel the high life. And everyone yearns to catch a show—think Grand Ole Opry—at the Ryman Auditorium, a.k.a. the Cathedral of Country. You should, too.

To come prepared, I got a little history under my belt at the Musicians Hall of Fame and Music. "Head nerd" Jay McDowell, a recovering musician himself, explained that its story encompasses all genres, from blues and R&R to bluegrass, pop and country. It traces the evolution of music on demand from "furniture—radios and phonographs—to today's device in your pocket."

Paul McCartney recorded in Nashville, as did Jimi Hendrix, who famously declared, "Here, everybody knows how to play together. Walk down the street and people are sitting on their porches playing: That's where I learned." So, needless to say, did performers from Roy Orbison to Johnny Cash… and the list goes on.

We gawk at the museum's salvaged Enactron Mobile Recording Studio—"a dirty, old trailer," says Jay, made of lead that magnificently blocked interference. Look for the scrawled autographs on the walls. Then we pop on headsets and pick up instruments (drums for moi) to "perform" onstage.

Proceed to the Country Music Hall of Fame & Museum to trace this music's roots: Appalachian fiddle and banjo; European accordion; African drums. By the 1920s, radios brought it nationwide. In the'70s, the Nashville sound added strings and backup vocals to the mix.

The tour continues at the fabled Studio B, where Dolly Parton cut over twenty records and Elvis sat at the very piano bench you're invited to occupy. Later, follow the neon igniting Broadway, a.k.a. Honkytonk Row, crammed with saloons that offer live music (no cover charge) by the stars of tomorrow.

History shines at the brand-new building of the Tennessee State Museum, unspooling the region's story through a Time Travel Tunnel starting eons before explorer DeSoto looted his way through; long before Andrew Jackson vaulted from here to the White House. The exhibit doesn't pull punches when discussing the KKK. The Depression that forced Blacks from jobs that white guys needed. The Manhattan Project of World War II. The trail of MLK and the Nashville sit-ins.

The Parthenon is a symbol of happier times, built for the city's 1897 Exposition. Yes, that Parthenon: It's an exact copy, fitting for the city called "the Athens of the South." Inside, gold-plated Goddess Athena stands 42 feet tall and a gallery celebrates American painting from 1850-1925.

More (and better) art abides in the Frist Art Museum, an Art Deco belle of 1930 that

Robert's Western World is regarded as Honky Tonk Heaven in Nashville.

Resting in Studio B is the piano where Elvis Presley himself sat while recording his hits.

originally served as a post office. The show of Frieda and Diego reveals the It couple of Mexico in photos of intimate moments, along with their works.

Proceed from there to my favorite art form, eating. And Nashville doesn't disappoint. It's won cred as the dining destination of the Southeast, with out-of-body experiences ranging from humble Prince's hot chicken stand to the elite, multi-course tasting menu at Catbird Seat. Acme Feed & Seed slicks up Southern staples like fried green tomatoes with pimento cheese, a terrific two-fer; redneck lo mein featuring collard greens and black-eyed peas; and ribs sided with mac & cheese, collards and slaw.

Henrietta Red is a bright and cheery site for James Beard winner Julia Sullivan's small plates, careening from wood-roasted oysters and shrimp toast, Southern style, to heirloom tomato salad and beyond. At Farm House, feast on pimento cheese beignets, pig ears, and devilled eggs as super-starters, then pork belly with Gouda grits and peach chutney; country ham with compressed watermelon and pickled peaches; or local trout. Proceed to Josephine to devour duck fat hashed browns and Nashville scrapple among the starters, followed by duck confit, Southernized with black-eyed peas, or scallops with grilled okra.

Punching above its weight is downtown's Woolworth—yup, the dime store whose lunch counter was the site of sit-ins and their brutal reprisals in the Sixties, detailed in photos and a menu insert. Today that lunch counter (and tables) serve up tasty fried green tomatoes paired with goat cheese; pimento cheese allied with crispy pork rinds; fried chicken, Nashville-hot; and dime-store burgers.

What led to those sit-ins? For insight on slave owners and their enslaved "property" that ran Tennessee's antebellum mansions, head out of town—first, northwest to Hendersonville to tour Rock Castle, built by slave labor in 1783 on 18 acres given to surveyor Daniel Smith for his service in the Revolutionary War. Admire the original furnishings, including a locked sugar chest, a sign of wealth, and stylish linoleum "carpets."

In Murfreesboro, to the Southeast, tour Stone River National Battlefield, where Park Ranger John McKay explains that Tennessee was second only to Virginia in number of Civil War battles. And this one proved even deadlier than that notorious Shiloh massacre. (Tennessee was a divided state, and the last one to secede.) President Lincoln, John explains, desperately needed a victory here to head into his re-election campaign. The bloody battle began at dawn—"the sky black, freezing rain and a cold river to cross." Every church became a field hospital—private homes, too. Troops that didn't make it fill the adjacent cemetery.

Continue to Cannonburgh—Murfreesboro's original name—a recreated village including schoolhouse, church, general store and working blacksmith's shop—and from there to Sellars Farm Archaeological Area, a Native American village of a hundred house sites in 1300 A.D. and then mysteriously disappearing three hundred years later. Today their outlines and mounds offer hints of the distant past.

Nearby stands another recreated village, Fiddlers Grove, composed of 50 historic buildings and a wild and crazy crew of re-enactors trying to sell you snake-oil medicine and engage you in a gunfight.

Want some authentic Nashville-style fried green tomatoes_ Stop by Acme Feed & Seed when you're in town.

Best for last? Could be. Steer south to Franklin for a don't-miss tour of two of its plantation homes caught in the nefarious Battle of Franklin. Carnton, built in 1826, claimed 44 slaves on this 400-acre farm. Eric Jacobson, of Franklin Trust, introduces the mansion with an unvarnished message on the horrors slavery wrought, but also encourages us to understand that these owners were "a product of their times, and their entire way of life was being destroyed."

The beautifully-wallpapered bedrooms were used as the army's impromptu surgery. Bloodstains still blot their floors. The family brought food, water, and bandages torn from petticoats to the wounded as bullets whizzed too close for comfort.

The nearby Carter House of 1830 is more modest—built on 300 cotton-growing acres worked by 22 slaves. Once the Union Army charged, the slaves took off, says our guide, pointing at bullet holes that pierced the walls as the family huddled in the basement. Six Confederate generals were among the 10,000 casualties that day.

Y'all come see for yourself! To plan your visit, check out www.visitmusiccity.com and www.tnvacation.com. ▮

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Walk The Walk

The 31st annual Minnesota Walk to End HIV returns Saturday, Oct. 12 in Minnehaha Regional Park.

This year's Minnesota Walk to End HIV, previously called the Minnesota AIDS Walk, will take place in the same location as the very first walk in 1988: Minnehaha Regional Park. With a goal of raising awareness about what it will take to end HIV in Minnesota and raising the funds to help make it happen, JustUs Health, the host of the walk, is aiming to educate and energize people about ways to reduce new infections, improve care, and fight stigma and stagnation.

"With the changes in medical treatment and social awareness about HIV over the past three decades, the Minnesota AIDS Walk changed its name to the Minnesota Walk to End HIV as a reflection of a real and attainable goal of ending HIV," says JustUs Health spokesperson Paul Skrbec.

Not only does the Minnesota Walk to End HIV represent a unified GLBT community, but it also represents the financial support through various partnerships.

"This year's walk also marks a return to providing financial support to a coalition of community-based partnerships including Aliveness Project, Children's Minnesota Perinatal and Pediatric HIV Program, Clare Housing, One Heartland, and Youth and AIDS Project through joint fundraising efforts," Skrbec says. "This strategy highlights the need for collective impact by multiple partners to end HIV. We are all in this together."

Over the years, the Minnesota Walk to End HIV has raised more than $15 million for the education, prevention, and empowerment services for those living with and affected by HIV. Participating in the Walk to End HIV means you are joining forces with community organizations across Minnesota to put an End to HIV. Funding from the walk continues more than three decades of work that provides HIV education, prevention, empowerment, and advocacy, according to JustUs Health's website.

"We ask that you register beforehand if at all possible, so we know how many folks to expect," reads the JustUs event info website. "There is no fundraising minimum requirement to walk and all are welcome, but the spirit of the walk has always been a grassroots effort to raise resources to make sure every member of our community has the support, safety, and dignity they deserve. Every dollar matters."

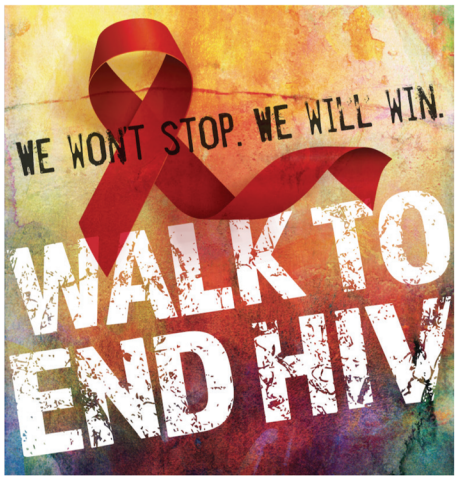

Image courtesy of JustUs Health

Whether you're registering yourself, planning on doing it as a team, or want to show your support through donations, be sure to share your participation with your friends and family and on social media. JustUs Health encourages walkers and donors to use #WeWontStop, #WeWillWin, #EndHIV, and #WalktoEndHIV on social media to spread the word and support the community.

Partnering with JustUs Health for this year's Minnesota Walk to End HIV are the following sponsors: Lavender Magazine, Delta, Hennepin Theatre Trust, Fairview, ViiV Healthcare, Gilead, and Twin Cities Pride.

Registration for the Minnesota Walk to End HIV will be from 9:30 to 10:30 a.m. on Saturday, Oct. 12. The kick-off rally and warm-ups will follow from 10:30 to 11:30 a.m., and the 1.2-mile walk is scheduled for 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. For more information, visit mnwalktoendhiv.org or justushealth.org. ∎

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